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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE SECOND PART OF ITS THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Tae Hyun YOO (Republic of Korea)

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

1. At its 16th, 17th and 18th meetings, on 1 and 2 September 1994, the Committee considered the prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan (A/49/301).

2. The Committee noted that the prototype was developed in response to the recommendations made by the Committee, and by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/218 of 23 December 1993. It was recalled that, while the current system had been intended to impose a discipline on programme managers and to provide a process for consultation with and among Member States, its effectiveness had, over a number of years, been called increasingly into question, both within the Secretariat and among Member States.

3. The Committee also noted that the schedule for preparation of the new medium-term plan would not allow it to be adopted any sooner than 1996, since 1995 is the year when the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997 is to be presented to the General Assembly for approval. The new medium-term plan, once adopted in 1996, would provide the framework for the preparation of the programme budget for 1998-1999.

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Discussion

4. Many delegations welcomed the prototype and concurred in the attempt to make the medium-term plan a more useful and responsive instrument for meeting the current and future objectives of the Organization.

5. Some delegations took note with interest of document A/49/301, and stressed the need to undertake a wide process of intergovernmental consultations in order to improve the prototype as well as to clarify some of its elements, in particular those related to the process of intergovernmental consultations, the structure of the programmes and the designation of priorities at the level of the subprogrammes, et cetera.

6. Many delegations welcomed the focus on objectives and the means to achieve them rather than on detailed descriptions of activities and outputs as had been the case in the past and noted that the proposed congruence between the plan and the Secretariat structure would facilitate the determination of responsibility and accountability of organizational units for their programmes. Some others expressed the view that the new approach should not imply the idea that the cost-benefit relationship is the sole criterion.

7. Many delegations also agreed that the perspective document would be a forward-looking, strategic document.

8. At the same time, a number of delegations expressed concern that the description of the perspective document, as presented in paragraph 6 of the report of the Secretary-General on the prototype, did not accurately reflect the recommendation of the General Assembly as presented in paragraph 3 (a) of the report.

9. It was the view of many delegations that the perspective must take fully into account an analysis of persistent problems as well as of emerging trends, and that the balance between the two must be scrupulously observed. It was felt that the formulation of the medium-term plan, including the perspective, should be an interactive process between Member States and the Secretariat, with the view to achieving the widest possible agreement.

10. Some delegations were of the view that the perspective document should have a sectoral approach and not be presented according to organizational structures as is proposed for the programme framework. Other delegations were of the view that a sectoral approach might result in too lengthy a document and that the focus should rather be on the future policy direction of the work of the Organization.

11. One delegation stressed the need for flexibility and preparation for change in the programme planning process. The perspective, as well as the programme framework, would be the subject of revision every second year. In the intervening period, new departures and major new projects could be reflected, as required, in addenda to the medium-term plan.

12. Some delegations expressed their concern about the possibility of elimination of subprogrammes whose activities have been mandated by the General

Assembly. In this context, they expressed the need to preserve those subprogrammes that have their own identity.

13. Many delegations stressed the need for the medium-term plan to be as concise as possible. Some delegations were of the view that the length of the document was not an end in itself but should only be determined by the coverage of the issues to be addressed.

14. Some delegations expressed serious reservations regarding the proposals for the programme framework and indicated that, in their view, this aspect would need to be thoroughly debated in the Fifth Committee. In that context, those delegations regretted that, in the proposals contained in annex II of the report of the Secretary-General, the Secretariat had included elements on which intergovernmental agreement had not been reached.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. The Committee welcomed the proposed new format of the medium-term plan, which would consist of a perspective and a programme framework for a period of four years, beginning in 1998 on the understanding that:

(a) Annexes I and II of document A/49/301 were for illustrative purposes only;

(b) The relevant legislative mandates should be indicated in the narrative of the programmes;

(c) The narrative of the subprogrammes should reflect all the mandated activities.

16. The Committee recommended that the perspective should strictly observe the balance between persistent problems and emerging trends and should be presented, therefore, according to the following structure:

(a) Persistent problems: these would be derived from an analysis of the longstanding problems that the Organization would continue to address;

(b) Emerging trends: these would be derived from an analysis of the current situation;

(c) Identification of challenges: this would address the old and new issues faced by the international community, based on the persistent problems and emerging trends;

(d) Role of the Organization: this would identify the contributions that the Organization could make in addressing the persistent problems, the emerging trends and the existing as well as new challenges;

(e) Directions to be pursued: this would outline in broad terms the courses of action that would need to be taken and the priority areas to be addressed.

17. The Committee stressed the necessity to observe and deliver all mandated activities.

18. The Committee stressed the need for further consultations with Member States and noted that, upon approval by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session of the new format, the Secretariat would begin drafting the plan for review, where feasible, by the specialized intergovernmental bodies prior to consideration by the Committee at its thirty-sixth session.

19. The Committee noted that insufficient attention had been given in the past to evaluation and that the new format would facilitate evaluation of programmes, in view of the emphasis on the formulation of clear objectives and results to be achieved.

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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE SECOND PART OF ITS THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Tae Hyun YOO (Republic of Korea)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

D. Review and development of procedures and norms, including workload analyses, to justify the creation, suppression, reclassification, conversion and redeployment of posts

1. At its 24th meeting, on 9 September, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on procedures and norms for the creation, suppression, reclassification, conversion and redeployment of posts (A/49/339).

Discussion

2. A number of delegations welcomed the report and considered that the proposals for increased flexibility for the Secretary-General in reclassification of posts at the P-2/1 to P-5 levels were reasonable. At the same time, it was felt that the current grading structure might be too high and should not necessarily be accepted as an appropriate base. Some delegations felt that the proportion of posts at the P-5 level should be limited to 20 per cent of those at the P-2/1 to P-5 levels, subject to review in the future.

3. Concern was also expressed at possible financial implications and a number of delegations felt that the criteria for the creation, suppression and

redeployment of posts outlined in the paper should be more specific. Some delegations also expressed concern at the possibility that exercise of flexibility in that context might result in transfers of resources between sections of the programme budget contrary to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organization.

4. Some delegations also expressed the view that, in the matter of the creation of posts, programme managers/heads of departments or offices should certify in writing the reasons for the new post or posts and why the need could not be met from within the posts currently available within that Department or Office.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the Secretary-General's report and recommended that it should be further considered by the relevant Main Committee of the General Assembly at the first part of the forty-ninth session.

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

1. At its and meetings, on 6 and 7 September 1994, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General containing the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/49/310).

Discussion

2. In introducing the proposed budget outline, the representatives of the Secretariat stressed that the outline was not a preliminary programme budget but only a preliminary estimate of resources to accommodate the proposed programme of activities during the biennium and therefore was general in nature, establishing broad resource projections developed at a high level of aggregation. The detailed review of programmes and establishment of requirements would be carried out when the proposed programme budget was developed.

3. A number of delegations welcomed the outline as proposed by the Secretary-General. They warmly supported the steps taken by the Secretariat to propose significant savings, as a result, in particular, of the termination of a number of obsolete activities; they also welcomed the intention of the Secretariat to conduct a review to ascertain efficiency gains and cost-effective measures that could be implemented without a negative impact on the fulfilment of mandates.

4. Some delegations regretted the decrease in the level of resources proposed for international cooperation for development and, in that context, expressed the view that such a decrease did not reflect the priority attached by the General Assembly in resolution 45/253 to the economic development of developing countries, the economic recovery of Africa, the environment and international drug control.

5. Some delegations expressed concern about the additional requirements proposed for the reinforcement of the current infrastructure for backstopping peace-keeping operations under the regular budget and pointed out that no decision had been taken by the General Assembly on that question.

6. Some delegations, while recognizing the importance of internal oversight, expressed the view that the proposed strengthening of the internal oversight functions of the Organization should not be a priority and, in that context, questioned the extraordinary increase in the level of resources proposed for internal oversight; they also expressed the view that the proposed strengthening of the internal oversight functions should not be at the expense of other activities, particularly in the economic and social sectors.

7. Other delegations warmly supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to strengthen the internal oversight mechanism and expressed the view that the strengthening was aimed at better control and evaluation of all programmes and would benefit the implementation of all the priorities.

8. A number of delegations emphasized that the concept of zero growth had not been endorsed by the General Assembly and that the rate of growth and the preliminary estimate were purely indicative. A number of delegations emphasized that the concept of zero real growth was not a prerequisite for the preparation of a proposed budget outline. Several delegations stressed that the application of zero growth should not be at the expense of priority development projects in Africa.

9. Some delegations stressed that currency fluctuations and inflation should be absorbed to the maximum extent possible. Other delegations expressed the view that the procedure currently followed for the recosting of currency fluctuations and inflation should be maintained.

10. A number of delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to achieve further efficiency gains and noted that he thought economies in the order of $15 million to be realistic. A number of delegations also stressed that the search for economies should not be at the expense of priority development projects in Africa.

11. A number of delegations, while expressing the need for further improving the efficiency of the Organization, indicated their concern about the negative growth contained in the outline and, in that context, indicated the need to implement all the mandates approved by Member States.

12. A number of delegations noted the proposed priorities given to political affairs, international and regional cooperation for development and human rights and humanitarian affairs, which took into account the priorities identified in

the medium-term plan and noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253 of 23 December 1990, as well as general trends of a broad sectoral nature as required by General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986.

13. A number of delegations expressed the view that priorities should be consistent with the priorities established in the medium-term plan, as noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253. Other delegations expressed the view that priorities should also reflect legislative intent since the adoption of that resolution. Some delegations urged that, as a fundamental part of the budgetary process, a rigorous search should be made for obsolete activities and activities of marginal utility.

14. One delegation expressed the view that the expenses of the International Seabed Authority should be treated within the outline and not outside as proposed by the Secretary-General.

15. One delegation expressed the view that, according to paragraph 2 of document A/49/310, budgetary provisions for the implementation of results of the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States should be included in the outline and regretted the omission of such proposals.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee examined the outline, using as a framework the four aspects listed in paragraph 1 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/310), namely:

(a) The preliminary estimate of resources to accommodate the proposed programme of activities during the biennium;

(b) Priorities, reflecting trends of a broad sectoral nature;

(c) Real growth, positive or negative, compared with the previous budget;

(d) Size of the Contingency Fund expressed as a percentage of the overall level of resources.

Preliminary estimate of resources

17. The Committee noted the estimate proposed by the Secretary-General in paragraph 4 of his report.

18. The Committee recommended, in accordance with its mandate, that the General Assembly should consider the preliminary estimate of resources submitted by the Secretary-General as a basis for its decision, taking into account the following:

(a) The estimate should be adequate to permit the implementation of all mandated activities;

(b) The preliminary estimate was of a general indicative nature and the breakdown by major programmes was illustrative;

(c) Although the preliminary estimates did not contain provision for inflation or for anticipated effects resulting from currency fluctuations in 1996-1997, consideration should be given to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 47/213;

(d) The preliminary estimate proposed by the Secretary-General had been prepared on a minimum-requirements basis and included provisions for which there was no legislative mandate yet and the financing for new mandates to be legislated by the General Assembly would be dealt with in conformity with paragraph 9 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 41/213;

(e) The intention of the Secretary-General was to conduct a review to achieve further efficiency gains;

(f) The projected implications of General Assembly decisions contained in the outline would be reviewed and adjusted on the basis of actual decisions taken by the General Assembly.

Growth

19. The Committee noted that, compared with the projected revised estimate for the biennium 1994-1995, growth for the preliminary estimate was anticipated at minus 3.2 per cent. The Committee recognized that that percentage might change in the light of the provisions contained in paragraph 18 above.

Contingency Fund

20. The Committee endorsed the size of the Contingency Fund, expressed as the percentage proposed by the Secretary-General and recommend that the working of the Fund be kept under review.

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Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Tae Hun YOO (Republic of Korea)

Addendum

COORDINATION QUESTIONS

Revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development

1. At its 24th and 25th meetings, on 9 and 12 September 1994, the Committee considered the Secretary-General's report on the revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (E/AC.51/1994/7), structured around six priority areas, namely human resource development and capacity-building; food, agriculture and agro-based industries; diversification of African economies; mobilization of external and domestic resources; growth, equity and sustainable development; and regional cooperation and integration.

General

2. The Committee was informed about the coordinated efforts that had led to the elaboration of the revised System-wide Plan. It considered that the collaboration that had taken place between the organizations of the United Nations system should be extended to African Governments, which were better placed to assess the problems and the actual needs of their countries. That collaboration should further be used for the coherent implementation of the Plan.

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Discussion

3. Most delegations considered the revised System-wide Plan an improvement over the initial version.

4. Most delegations appreciated the link between the priorities of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the six priority areas proposed in the revised System-wide Plan and expressed the view that the Plan could serve as a valuable instrument of coordination within the United Nations system.

5. The same delegations underscored the importance of sustainable development as defined in the Tokyo Declaration adopted by the Tokyo International Conference on African Development held on 5 and 6 October 1993 and stressed the need for sustained efforts by both African countries and their development partners.

6. A number of delegations suggested that the concept of equity introduced in paragraph 7 of the System-wide Plan should be broadened to incorporate external elements such as the deterioration of terms of trade, the fall in commodity prices, the heavy, persistent and ever-increasing indebtedness of African countries, etc. Those delegations underlined the need for the System-wide Plan to reinforce coordination with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO) on matters related to the fluctuations in prices of commodities on international markets, given the vital importance of primary products for the development of Africa.

7. A number of delegations indicated that, without proper resource allocation, it would be difficult to implement the System-wide Plan. In stressing the need for additional resources, some delegations stated that listing available resources by country or region would facilitate the monitoring of the flow of resources to Africa through the United Nations system.

8. A number of delegations emphasized the link between resource mobilization and Africa's debt burden and called for more far-reaching action to alleviate that burden. In that connection, attention was called to the outcome of the recent Ministerial Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries on Debt and Development in Jakarta and the wish expressed that attention be drawn to that vital issue in future meetings of other regional and international bodies. Furthermore, some delegations underscored the necessity and urgency for the United Nations to consider as a priority programme the mobilization of external and internal financial resources and debt alleviation for the development of African countries.

9. A number of delegations felt that the issue of African debt addressed in the Plan as a subprogramme should have been treated as one of the major priority programmes with an appropriate title and urged that that should be taken into consideration in the course of implementation and during the review of the System-wide Plan by the Committee in 1997.

10. Referring to an environment conducive to African economic recovery and development, a number of delegations pointed out the impact of certain economic policies and/or strategies of developed countries on African economies.

11. A number of delegations observed that, as regards the causes of the overall poor economic performance, the emphasis in the Plan was too much focused on external factors. According to those delegations, internal factors played an important role as well.

12. A number of delegations questioned the validity of the Plan, highlighting the fact that it dealt with Africa on a more regional level instead of being country-specific.

13. A number of delegations insisted on the end-result of the System-wide Plan, which was to lead African countries to recovery and development and stressed the need to create conditions that encouraged political stability and enhanced human rights, which in turn would facilitate economic development.

14. A number of delegations expressed the view that the System-wide Plan of Action must be implemented according to the national priorities, policies and legislation of African Governments. They also expressed the opinion that the implementation of the Plan should not imply any conditionality for African Governments and that its results should contribute to the economic and social development of African countries according to their priorities.

15. A number of delegations urged the United Nations system to assist African countries in their interactions and negotiations with various forums and international financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, together with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Economic Commission for Africa and other organizations concerned, should devise a course of action for providing that crucial assistance.

Conclusion and recommendations

16. The Committee took note with appreciation of the revised System-wide Plan of Action, and endorsed the focus on six priority programmes linked to the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The Committee called upon the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to take all necessary steps for the effective implementation of the Plan in close cooperation with African Governments.

17. The Committee underlined the importance of inter-university cooperation, especially in research and training, to promote creativity, quality and innovation. In that respect and on the understanding that the United Nations University would be invited to collaborate in the subprogramme on higher education, the Committee stressed the need for cooperation with that organ. The Committee also stressed the importance of distance-learning and emphasized that science and technology transfer should not be overlooked.

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997

Introduction

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 at its 12th to 15th and 19th meetings, on 30 and 31 August and 2 September 1994.

2. The Committee was concerned that the late issuance of documentation dealing with the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan hindered the work of the Committee; working time was lost and in some cases the Committee found it more difficult to arrive at conclusions than would have been the case had documentation been issued on time.

3. The Committee noted that a number of proposed revisions had not been presented to the relevant sectoral and/or functional bodies concerned. The Committee stressed the need for all proposed revisions to be submitted to the relevant Main Committees of the General Assembly. In that connection, the Committee invited the Chairmen of the Main Committees to ensure that the work of the General Assembly was organized in such a manner as to facilitate their

consideration of the proposed revisions prior to the consideration of the item by the Fifth Committee.

4. The Committee's views have been reflected in its conclusions and recommendations under the relevant programmes. The outcome of the Committee's review of the following individual programmes listed below is detailed further in the report:

Programme 6.	Elimination of apartheid
Programme 8.	Peaceful uses of outer space
Programme 11.	Policy development and coordination
Programme 12.	Global development issues and policies
Programme 13.	Trade and development
Programme 14.	Trade expansion, export promotion and service sector development
Programme 15.	Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, and special programmes
Programme 17.	Science and technology for development
Programme 18.	Population
Programme 21.	Public administration and finance
Programme 22.	Human settlements
Programme 23.	Transnational corporations
Programme 24.	Statistics
Programme 25.	Global social issues and policies
Programme 26.	Social integration
Programme 31.	Regional cooperation for development in Asia and the Pacific
Programme 32.	Regional cooperation for development in Europe
Programme 34.	Regional cooperation for development in Western Asia
Programme 35.	Promotion and protection of human rights
Programme 36.	International protection of and assistance to refugees
Programme 37.	Emergency humanitarian assistance
Programme 38.	Public information
Programme 46.	Sustainable development